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ABSTRACT

In her inaugural address in San Francisco, July 4, 1975, the new president of the American Library Association (ALA) poses some questions about the library's future, its place in the community, its relationship to governing bodies, its role, functions, and responsibilities. She points out ALA's concern with these questions as reflected in the new association goals and objectives passed at the January, 1975, meeting. These goals call for ALA's committment to user oriented services for everybody; inter-library cooperation, a nationwide information delivery system, and equal information access for all; international cooperation; intellectual freedom; and improved treatment and training of library personnel. The new president encourages the participation of ALA and its chapters in pursuing these goals and in evaluating the association's effectiveness in so doing. (LS)

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IN TOUCH WITH TOMORROW

Allie Beth Martin

Inaugural address of the new President of the American Library Association

San Francisco, California, Friday, July 4, 1975

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Today as I greet our head table guests and extend congratulations and appreciation to all who are here these expressions have new meaning. The real strength of any association is in its members and in the units of which it is comprised. Never before has this been so true of the American Library Association. The new role of the divisions in ALA places a far greater responsibility for the success of the Association on you, our leaders, assembled here on the platform and on your successors.

Tnree expressions of personal appreciation are in order before I get on with my formal remarks.

There are many bonuses accompanying the work and responsibility of being an ALA officer. Surely one of the best has been having the opportunity to work with Ed Holley. Throughout the year I have been watching closely, fully aware of how much I had to learn about my job for the year ahead. His wonderful combination of ebullience, common sense, articulate expression (that I really envy), his humanity, his energy - I could go on and on about his unique strengths which were exactly what we needed in the year just past. In addition, Ed, I've come to an appreciation of a sense of history which I never had before and which I hope I won't lose.

My next thank you is to the Headquarters staff, the people who really bore the brunt of the financial stringencies which got us out of the red in a year when many organizations have been in

IR 002 354

financial trouble and in a time when it has cost more just to stand still. In fact, they have set such a remarkable example that I imagine many of us with financial problems at home would like to take some of their good spirit, determination and dedication along with us. Also, we are faced with more of the same frugality in the year ahead for we are not yet so well off that we can abandon our budget stretching.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge publicly a group of people at two tables here in the front of the room - colleagues from Oklahoma - and to say a special thank you to the members of the Tulsa City-County Library staff who are here and to some one hundred sixty more back at home - I'd like you Tulsans to stand and I hope you'll tell the rest at the library that we thought about them today, too.

My remarks here today constitute sort of a sequel to Bob Wedgeworth's lucid statement earlier this week and to Ed Holley's eloquent president's report. Indeed you may think we have been in collusion or had the same speech writer. We have had the opportunity to talk at some length about what we hoped might be accomplished during the coming year and about our personal priorities. So if you see some similarity in our statements - well, you are just going to have a double dose of some of the same ideas in the next year.

I have elected to organize my thoughts under the title, In Touch with Tomorrow.

It has seemed to me that over the years one of the characteristics of the American Library Association has been constant crisis. In fact, more recently the question has been raised: "How can we survive if we continue as we are?" As a result, much of our time and energy have been spent solving the day to day organizational problems, struggling with the immediate, often clashing with each other and not too constructively. There is some irony in this since the Charter of ALA set forth in 1879 as one of its goals, "cultivating good will among its members."

Roland Warren opens his Perspectives on the American Community with the statement: "The more fateful the problem grows of how daily life is experienced where one lives and labors, the more important it becomes to seek a valid understanding of why things are as they are, so that we may go on to consider how we may become worthy of the best that is in us..." Today, at the close of our conference it is essential that we are indeed "in touch with tomorrow:" First, from the long view and secondly, for the short term - the next year.

According to Dag Hammarskjold, "Only he who keeps his life fixed on the far horizon will find the right road." The current speed of change may make distant observation less accurate, but even so, how much more important to raise our sights from the immediate to that horizon toward which we are hurtling ever more rapidly.

As we view this horizon - the world of 2,000 and after - critical questions must be asked about libraries and library personnel. Bob Wedgeworth asked and answered some of these earlier this week. What then will be the library's relationship to the larger community in which it will function? How will the library be perceived by the academic governance, by the system of elementary and secondary education, or by the government - local, state, federal? Will it be integral to the operation of these communities, integral in that it will be an active participant in the planning and providing of essential services?

How will librarians view their own responsibilities? Will their traditional role of collector and organizer have shifted so that a major function will have become that of connector and facilitator, the vital link between the individual and his informational and educational resources? Will libraries have accommodated to the continuing rate of change so that they will anticipate the informational and educational needs of their communities instead of responding sometimes belatedly?

What has all of this to do with the American Library Association? A great deal. Few, if any of us, have the answers to the questions just posed. Unless they can be satisfactorily answered, however, we may miss the road as we move toward that distant horizon. We will never be "in touch with tomorrow." We need the substantive

and constructive answers which can result from the common efforts of the many members and of our organization.

In recent years we have been, I believe, increasingly more responsive to the priorities set by the membership. Witness the new offices: The Office for Library Personnel Resources, the Office for Library Service to the Disadvantaged and the Office for Research. We have met and resolved many daily crises but we have not systematically updated our long-range goals and our short-term objectives. Nor have we consistently evaluated our progress.

In one afternoon session at Mid-Winter just past, we adopted a landmark document, the report of the Planning Committee, The Goals and Objectives of the American Library Association. In fact, it was passed with so little attention that I wondered if the Council and membership assembled really knew what they were doing.

Not only was the report adopted but it provided the framework for continuous review and updating of our goals and objectives which we have not had previously. How many of you know how the goal of ALA as stated in this report differs from previous statements which go back some ninety-nine years? Do you know what the objectives are that were targeted as necessary to the achievement of the long-range goal? Do you know today what specific courses

of action were spelled out for the implementation of these objectives? Well, I couldn't answer these questions either if I hadn't reread the report of the Planning Committee when I thougnt about ALA's program of work for the next year.

I suspect most of us if asked to state the goal of the American Library Association would say that we are committed to the "promotion of libraries and librarianship" or some paraphrase of this idea, but we have committed ourselves to more than that. What is new is that we are now also committed to "assure the delivery of user oriented library and information service to all." This last portion of the goal contains some key words that lend new vitality to our long-range statement of purpose. "To assure the delivery of user oriented library and information service to all." The words "to assure, insure or ensure" all mean to make something secure or certain, "but 'assure' refers to persons," according to the American Heritage Dictionary, and "it alone has the sense of setting a person's mind at rest." What are we making certain? User oriented library and information service for everybody. Did you realize that was what you had agreed to do? "Serving everybody" has been a matter of library concern for a long time. Is it possible? In ALA we try to recognize the greatest diversity of library service needs. This is why we have thirteen divisions, ten round tables, five offices and hundreds of committees. It is because we know library and information service to "all" requires

a wide variety of approaches. There are two words in that goal statement which were inserted in the council, and they may be the most difficult to achieve of the entire statement. They are "user oriented." Up to now, if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit much of what we have done has been "librarian" oriented.

Happily, the overarching goal is long range, a framework within which we operate, our unique reason for being, not the immediate objective. But what are the objectives necessary to achieve the long-range goal? There are five of them. As we review these five objectives, think of them from these viewpoints.

1. As an ALA member, do you feel the association is really helping accomplish these objectives?
2. As a member of an ALA chapter, a state or regional association - are these the objectives of the chapter to which you belong?
3. What are you doing personally to achieve these objectives?

Here are the objectives which we adopted last January:

1) Provision of library and information services and resources for all of the people of the United States in order to increase their opportunity to participate in society, to learn to achieve self-fulfillment, to pursue careers, and to obtain information needed for research. That sounds like a tall order, but it does say "provide" and implies access which

should be possible given the breadth of interests and human resources in the library world. Also, there is a footnote regarding the term "information." As used in our statement, "information" is used in the generic sense and includes ideas, the products of man's creative endeavors, facts and data.

2) Provision of leadership for inter-library cooperation leading to a nationwide information delivery system which equalizes access to information systems. We are talking about providing leadership for inter-library cooperation in ALA. The operable word in this objective is "leadership." It suggests that ALA will lead the profession through its demonstration of inter-library cooperation. At this meeting our first ALA committee devoted to providing this leadership for inter-library cooperation has begun its work. Individual divisions have already initiated efforts toward inter-library cooperation in the absence of an over-all committee. One word of caution - our new organizational structure and new dues scale could be a barrier to inter-library cooperation if the parochial interests of the individual divisions, round tables and offices should become paramount in the competition for new members.

3) Cooperation to achieve increased access to library and information resources throughout the world. This, of course, means supporting institutions with international, national, and regional resource strengths. Our record on the inter-

national scene has been poor in recent years. This coming year a modest commitment to fund an international relations office promises a new beginning. Were it not for the determination of a few dedicated individuals and the continuing efforts of the International Relations Round Table and the International Relations Committee, we would be starting from ground zero.

Support of intellectual freedom as expressed in the "Library Bill of Rights" and the "Freedom to Read" statement and support of librarians, trustees, or libraries whose defense of these principles is challenged. If we were evaluating our intellectual freedom activity, past and present, on the basis of effort, we might rank rather well. If we compare the number of sensorship cases in libraries this year with the last few years, our efforts are going to have to be multiplied. Recently censorship pressures have increased substantially at state and local levels. As a result, ALA will be required to marshall its forces differently and greatly increased activity in the ALA chapters will be necessary. Limited financial resources, lack of knowledge of how to deal with censorship when it strikes are probably among the most serious problems facing the profession. Until confronted with a live case, there is a tendency to hope that censorship problems will occur somewhere else and that someone else will be called to deal with them.

5) Development and support of library personnel and trustees through affirmative action, education, personal welfare and training. We have just begun to function in some of these areas. Formal library education has long been recognized as an ALA responsibility, but in the realm of affirmative action, personnel welfare and training, which I assume includes continuing education, we are just beginning. Our new offices are a good start. However, the Library Education and Manpower Statement adopted in 1970 has received meager Association support to date.

What should we do in the year ahead to insure progress toward implementation of our Goals and Objectives? Specific and measurable objectives have not yet been developed. We have adopted a basic document which the units and the chapters should use as the basis for developing their own specifics.

The recommendations of the Planning Committee include ten courses of action which if taken will move us ahead. I believe the tenth of these proposed courses of action may be one of the most important, if not the most promising of all the suggestions for the immediate future. It is the strengthening and encouraging of ALA chapters to work effectively in accomplishing ALA goals and objectives. I might restate the recommendation to stress strengthening and encouraging ALA chapters to better serve users, libraries and library personnel in their own states or regions, but I won't quibble about

the terminology. Also, the statement should be broadened to include helping the ALA chapters to meet their own goals and objectives. The important thing is that if the thousands of members of the chapters are to realize the full benefits of ALA's leadership and its many services, ALA is going to have to go to the chapters, work more effectively at the grass roots. As ALA becomes ever larger and more unwieldly, as travel becomes more expensive and budgets are tighter, it is even more apparent that its members must be served within their own states and regions.

In the year ahead ALA will focus its efforts on more effective chapter relations and on developing services which will relate more directly to individuals in these chapters.

Already many of the divisions and other units are recognizing the importance of taking their programs and services to the chapters. A roster of speakers, suggestions for programs and other services and activities is being compiled and will be distributed. Chapters seeking outside programs should consider the wide range of resources available from the National Association. Ed Holley, Bob Wedgeworth, Clara Jones and I all enjoy traveling, but we are not the only people who should be invited when an outside speaker is desired. If you call on a specialist, whether officer or staff from within a division or office, you will probably secure a person who will make a double contribution: first as an ALA representative and secondly as a specialist in

a given field who can work with his or her counterparts within the chapter.

ALA representatives should not be thought of only as banquet speakers. Consultants services for an orientation for your officers, for developing workshops, for planning continuing education activities, for guiding a new executive board might provide even more substantial assistance. Nor is it always necessary for someone to travel to the chapter. There are other means of sharing the best of an ALA pre-conference or annual conference program with the chapters.

The logistics and the details remain to be worked out, but the time to begin is now. The first step is to overcome the fear sometimes expressed in state and regional meetings that ALA is a competitor.

One word of caution is in order. The divisions are all operating with uncertain funds and limited staffs this year. Some restraint must be exercised before stretching limited resources too thinly. Certainly, one of the best ways for divisions to recruit members and improve their financial status is to be visible in the states and regions.

Other courses of action for use in achieving our objectives include: legislation, establishing guidelines and standards, investigating and making facts known, taking legal action, mo-

bilizing a vigorous public information program, providing a vehicle for discussion on socially significant issues, sponsoring publications; conferences, including the White House Conference, and the National Conference, stimulating and coordinating research.

There are two more courses of action which deserve some elaboration because I believe they ahve not been adequately used in past. One is coordinating our efforts with other organizations whose goals and activities relate to those of ALA. These include governmental agencies, the information industry, international bodies, the mass media, publishers, social service agencies. With some of these we actually have an adversary relationship at present, for example, the information industry and the publishers. Others simply ignore us. This is too often the case with the mass media, social service agencies, and sometimes even the governmental agencies.

A combination of the utmost patience, finesse, and political know-how will be required to achieve any degree of success in working with many of these organizations but we must stop talking to each other, pleasant as it is, and start cultivating more and more allies outside librarianship.

The last course of action recommended by the Planning Committee which I will mention is perhaps the most difficult of all to iniate. It is the development and evaluation of Association pro-

grams in terms of guidelines and stated objectives to assure accountability and to measure progress. How can we measure the effectiveness of our activities, how can we evaluate the benefits of our services for members? Is it possible? Most of us are faced with figuring out how to be accountable in our own libraries - if we aren't, we will be in time. If ALA is to assay a leadership role, it must serve as an example of responsible management, an example for the libraries of the country. This includes not only setting goals and objectives but also determining how much progress we have made by means of continuous measurement and evaluation. This evaluation of our progress must be done for ALA at large and within the units.

At this conference we have heard a great deal about the national program for libraries. In parallel we are placing a new emphasis on goals and planning for ALA. So that we know that we are indeed in touch with tomorrow and we have a sense of purpose and direction as we move toward the far horizon. How will this be done? It will require participation of the ALA administration, of the units, the chapters and the individuals members. The next step is for each of the units to set its own priorities within the framework of the goal and objectives set forth by the Planning Committee. Only the most general, the most basic framework, has been established. The development, the fleshing out, must come from the units with reaction and involvement from the local level. The evaluative steps are yet to evolve.

And now I'll close with a couple of footnotes.

First, the best possible campaign to enter the second century with 50,000 members will be to concentrate on the forward push proposed by our planning committee with a new focus at the local level.

And finally, I propose a fitting climax to the year ahead in which we work toward achieving our objectives and make actual progress toward our long-range goal. The climax will be a celebration, a celebration of 100 years of work and effort, yes of progress toward our goals. The theme for next year's conference July 18-24, 1976 will be "Celebrate" and we are going to do just that in a conference which will be long remembered, the best in a hundred years and I will see you there!